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UNCLAS VIENNA 000262

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA PLANS POSITIVE STATEMENT ON IRAQ ELECTIONS

REF: A. (A) STATE 12610

[1](#)B. (B) STATE 12757

[1](#)C. (C) STATE 14649

This cable is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please treat accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) At a January 28 meeting, Foreign Ministry Middle East director (assistant secretary-equivalent) Ralph Scheide told EconPolCouns that Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik would issue a positive statement Monday, January 31 on the Iraq elections. Scheide's draft (which the Foreign Minister had not yet approved) congratulates the Iraqi people for their historic achievement in holding elections, notes the need to overcome anti-democratic violence, and discusses further assistance to Iraq. Scheide said the EU planned to make its own announcement along similar lines on Monday.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The draft Austrian statement notes that Austria has organized a special program to train ten Iraqi diplomats at Austria's Diplomatic Academy. Scheide said the program begins at the end of January and runs for two months. Austria will cover all the costs of the course, which amount to some 100,000 euros, and will not seek co-funding or reimbursement (as it would normally do for foreign students).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Scheide also told us that an Austrian will observe absentee voting in Amman. The observer is an Interior Ministry official at Austria's Embassy in Amman.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Austrian firms have begun to engage in Iraq, Scheide said. Austrian-Iraqi trade had expanded by 170 percent in the past year, albeit from a low baseline. However, Austrian firms were not anxious for publicity at this point, fearing that a higher profile would make them targets of violence in Iraq.
Brown